

DAVID Y. IGE  
GOVERNOR



JAMES K. NISHIMOTO  
CHIEF NEGOTIATOR

**STATE OF HAWAII  
OFFICE OF COLLECTIVE BARGAINING  
EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR**  
235 S. BERETANIA STREET, SUITE 1201  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813-2437

February 4, 2015

**TESTIMONY TO THE  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR & PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT**

For Hearing on Friday, February 6, 2015  
9:00 a.m., Conference Room 309

By

JAMES K. NISHIMOTO  
CHIEF NEGOTIATOR

**House Bill No. 553  
Relating to Collective Bargaining**

**(WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY)**

CHAIRPERSON MARK NAKASHIMA, VICE CHAIR KEOHOKALOLE AND MEMBERS  
OF THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR & PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on H.B. No. 553.

The purpose of H.B. 553 is to allow UH graduate students to be included in an appropriate collective bargaining unit.

The Office of Collective Bargaining (OCB) respectfully requests that H.B. 553 be **HELD.**

OCB understands that the University of Hawaii has submitted testimony regarding H.B. 553 and concurs with the University's comments.

Additionally, OCB expresses its concern that UH graduate students would be a new classification of workers that may not fall within any of the existing fourteen (14) bargaining units under HRS §89-6(a). Therefore, either the current categories would need to be amended or an additional bargaining unit created. Additionally, while three (3) of the fourteen (14) existing bargaining units have retained their right to strike while

all other bargaining units are subject to interest arbitration, it is unclear if a new graduate student bargaining unit were to be established, when the impasse resolution process would apply, i.e., right to strike or interest arbitration.

Since mandatory subjects of collective bargaining cover wages, hours, conditions of employment and fringe benefits, all such subjects shall now become “cost items” subject to legislative appropriation pursuant to HRS §89-10(b). Stipends that are currently provided by the University to graduate students would become negotiable cost items along with possible contributions to the Employer-Union Health Benefits Trust Fund and other cost items.

Based on the foregoing, OCB respectfully requests that this measure be held.



# **UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM**

## **Legislative Testimony**

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Testimony Before the  
House Committee on Labor & Public Employment  
Friday, February 6, 2015 at 9 a.m.

By Dr. Risa Dickson  
Vice President for Academic Affairs  
University of Hawai'i  
and  
Kalbert Young  
Vice President for Budget & Finance  
University of Hawai'i

### **HB 553 – RELATING TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING**

Chair Nakashima, Vice Chair Keohokalole and Members of House Committee on Labor & Public Employment:

We hereby provide the following testimony regarding House Bill 553 – Relating to Collective Bargaining which proposes to amend HRS, §89-6, to effectively allow “graduate students employed by the University of Hawai'i” to be included in an appropriate bargaining unit.

In deliberating on the approach to allow university-employed graduate students to be included for collective bargaining, there are several issues that the Legislature, University and taxpayers should consider. From an employment perspective, first consider the rationality of requiring the State and University to collectively bargain employment with employed students – in this case, graduate assistants. The University's graduate assistants are unlike any other employees of the State. First and foremost, they are students first - employees second. Graduate assistants are student learners. They are at the University to learn as much about their fields of study as their time and talents will allow. These graduate assistants are mentored and supervised by our rank 3, 4, and 5 Faculty members who all hold Ph.D.'s and have many years of proven professional competence and experience, including evidence of proficiency in teaching. Part of our efforts as University mentors is to teach graduate assistants the subject matter. An equal or large part of our efforts is devoted to turning them out as academic professionals with real job skills in research techniques, teaching expertise, database management, etc. They learn these essential skill sets while in their graduate assistant positions under the guidance and supervision of our current faculty employees. A graduate assistant is similar to an on-the-job training or apprenticeship training program. It is not a career or a profession, but the beginning stages most faculty must complete to pursue a career in higher education. There is no long term career opportunities for graduate assistants at the University.

As graduate assistants, their duties and work assignments differ significantly from that of our faculty members. Our faculty members in ranks 3, 4, and 5 who mentor graduate assistants are required to teach classes and/or develop research programs with no supervision or oversight. There are at times consultation and interaction with other Faculty members depending on the department's teaching needs or research focus, but

there is not supervision *per se*. A graduate assistant does not step into a classroom, laboratory, or field exercise without supervision of some kind. By comparison, senior teaching assistants may be capable of teaching a lecture section with little or no supervision because they have been mentored and trained to take on that type of assignment. Similarly, senior research assistants will undertake more complex roles without strict supervision or even have the capacity to develop new techniques as they grow into their roles. Our goal is to train and mentor graduate assistants to get them to that point where they can function as professionals and begin their academic careers.

Secondly, from a statutory consistency perspective, while the bill's description does describe that the purpose and intent of the proposed legislation is to allow UH graduate students to be included in an appropriate collective bargaining unit, this new classification of workers may not fall within any of the existing fourteen (14) categories of bargaining units under HRS, §89-6(a). Therefore, either the current categories will need to be amended or an additional bargaining unit would need to be created. In addition, three (3) of the fourteen (14) existing bargaining units have retained their right to strike while all other bargaining units are subject to interest arbitration. Therefore, some of the issues that would need to be addressed in the legislation includes but is not limited to, the definition of the employer and votes under HRS, §89-6(d) for graduate students and the mechanism for dispute resolution or impasse procedure (i.e., right to strike or interest arbitration) under HRS, §89-11.

Thirdly, the State of Hawai'i and the University of Hawai'i must also somberly consider the financial ramifications of allowing student employees such as graduate students into Chapter 89, HRS, collective bargaining. There will be significant cost increases for both the University and the State of Hawai'i should the Legislature decide to expand collective bargaining provisions to this currently non-bargaining class of employees.

Graduate students of the University are currently compensated via a package that includes a variety of benefits. Consider that current compensation for employed graduate students varies dependent upon individual circumstances of the student. University-employed graduate students receive tuition waivers that can be valued at between \$458 to \$1,382 per credit hour per semester, depending upon their resident (or non-resident) status. Factors such as whether the student is a Hawai'i resident or non-resident will increase the value of the tuition waiver benefit. For example, a full time resident graduate student tuition can range from \$5,500.00 to \$9,000.00 per semester while non-resident tuition ranges from \$13,400.00 to \$16,600 per semester. They also may receive a monetary stipend that can vary by the educational program that they are associated with. The current level of compensation is not an insignificant cost to the University.

Since mandatory subjects of bargaining covers wages, hours, conditions of employment and fringe benefits, all such subjects shall now become "cost items" subject to legislative appropriations pursuant to HRS, §89-10(b). For example, membership in the State Employees' Retirement System as provided to employees in Chapter 88, HRS, will add pension contribution costs to the State and employee. As with other bargaining unit members, enrollment in the Employer-Union Trust Fund for health insurance benefits will also add increased expenses to the University for contributions and to the State for total

liability of the system. Additionally, all compensation collectively bargained for can be treated as wages that will be subject to employment and income taxes.

The Legislature should consider the cost factor for additional expenses that will be incurred above the current operational costs. Adding collective bargaining components to this class of employees who are first and foremost student employees will increase State general fund demand while simultaneously increasing University operational expenses.

We respectfully request the House Committee on Labor and Public Employment defer any further action on this measure.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.



## HAWAII GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION

AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO

RANDY PERREIRA, Executive Director • Tel: 808.543.0011 • Fax: 808.528.0922

The Twenty-Eighth Legislature, State of Hawaii  
House of Representatives  
Committee on Labor and Public Employment

Testimony by  
Hawaii Government Employees Association  
February 6, 2015

H.B. 553 – RELATING TO  
COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

The Hawaii Government Employees Association, AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO strongly supports the concept of allowing graduate students employed by the University of Hawaii to be included in an appropriate collective bargaining unit, as proposed in H.B. 553.

Graduate students employed by the University have encountered numerous work related issues in the past; including budget set backs and increases in class size and workload, in addition to the high cost of living in Hawaii. Despite these issues, graduate student employees have not received a salary increase since 2004. Amending Ch. 89-6, Hawaii Revised Statutes by removing the exclusion of this group from collectively bargaining is the first necessary step in allowing them to unionize and will ensure their rights as state workers.

Respectfully submitted,

Randy Perreira  
Executive Director

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
Sent: Thursday, February 05, 2015 3:58 PM  
To: LABtestimony  
Cc: tabalos@hsta.org  
Subject: \*Submitted testimony for HB553 on Feb 6, 2015 09:00AM\*

**HB553**

Submitted on: 2/5/2015

Testimony for LAB on Feb 6, 2015 09:00AM in Conference Room 309

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Wil Okabe	Hawaii State Teachers Association	Support	No

**Comments:**

Please note that testimony submitted less than 24 hours prior to the hearing, improperly identified, or directed to the incorrect office, may not be posted online or distributed to the committee prior to the convening of the public hearing.

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Date: February 6, 2015  
Time: 9:00 AM  
Place: Conference Room 309

To: House Committee on Labor  
Representative Mark Nakashima, Chair  
Representative Jarrett Keohokalole, Vice Chair

Re: Support of HB 553 Relating to the University of Hawaii

My name is Michelle Tigchelaar, and I am writing on behalf and as the President of the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UHM) Graduate Student Organization (GSO). The GSO represents the approximately 5,000 graduate students at the UH Mānoa campus. I am writing in strong support of HB 553, which allows UH graduate students to be included in an appropriate collective bargaining unit.

Graduate students critically contribute to the various missions of UH, by serving as Teaching Assistants for our undergraduate students, and working on world-class research projects as Research Assistants. Collectively these positions are known as Graduate Assistants (GAs). In spite of their critical role however, GAs at UH are poorly paid. In a 2012 survey conducted by the GSO, 90% of respondents indicated that their wages do not cover the cost of living in Hawai'i. The pay scale for graduate assistants has not been increased to reflect increasing living expenses since 2003/2004. Furthermore, graduate students have little job security, since they are rehired on an annual, and sometimes even semester, basis. They also are not afforded sick days or family leave. GAs are thus in an extremely vulnerable position, with few options to raise grievances.

We are currently barred from our constitutional right to collective bargaining by Section 89-6 of the Hawaii Revised Statutes, which excludes all student help from coverage. This is however not reflective of the type of work that we (versus other types of student help) perform, and contrary to national trends. Since the late 1960s, many states around the country have extended public employee collective bargaining rights to GAs. In 2012, approximately 65,000 graduate student employees were organized at 28 institutions of higher education in the public sector, representing about one-fifth of all GAs. A 2013 study of these unions, by three Rutgers University scholars, showed that they improve pay and professional support for graduate students, and have had a neutral to positive impact on student performance and perceptions of academic freedom.

Graduate students are an integral part of the UH system. We constitute a committed learning community, do important research, and perform a substantial proportion of

Graduate Student Organization • University of Hawai'i at Mānoa  
Hemenway Hall 212 • 2445 Campus Road • Honolulu, HI 96822





the teaching duties. However, we are not afforded the same labor protections that faculty and staff are. We deserve to be treated equally, not abused and exploited. The GSO therefore strongly supports HB 553. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Michelle Tigchelaar  
UH Mānoa Graduate Student Organization, President

Email: [mtigch@hawaii.edu](mailto:mtigch@hawaii.edu)  
Phone: (808) 724-1392

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
Sent: Wednesday, February 04, 2015 1:11 AM  
To: LABtestimony  
Cc: makahababy@aol.com  
Subject: Submitted testimony for HB553 on Feb 6, 2015 09:00AM

**HB553**

Submitted on: 2/4/2015

Testimony for LAB on Feb 6, 2015 09:00AM in Conference Room 309

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Sara Perry	UH Student Caucus	Support	No

Comments: The UH Student Caucus is in support of this bill which will allow the possibility and opportunity for Graduate Students in the UH System to form collective bargaining units. It is a right afforded to all other state and city employees within Hawaii, and should be no less important when being considered as a right for our University students. Also, just because they would be given the right to do this does not mean that they will, only that they now would have an option and avenue open to them that should be theirs anyway. Mahalo for your consideration of this testimony, Sara E. Perry UH Student Caucus, Chair

Please note that testimony submitted less than 24 hours prior to the hearing, improperly identified, or directed to the incorrect office, may not be posted online or distributed to the committee prior to the convening of the public hearing.

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Representative Mark M. Nakashima, Chair  
Representative Jarrett Keohokalole, Vice Chair  
Committee on Labor and Public Employment

House of Representatives of the State of Hawai'i

Lance D. Collins, Ph.D  
Law Office of Lance D Collins

Friday, February 6, 2015  
Support H.B. 553, Relating to Collective Bargaining

My name is Lance D. Collins. I am an attorney in private practice. I strongly support this bill.

Graduate students perform the same work as other public employees who work for the University of Hawai'i. In most instances, this work is done with the same level of supervision or less as other public employees at the University of Hawai'i. The only difference between graduate student employees and others is that the graduate students have no protection from arbitrary and capricious employment decisions and often must suffer poor and sometimes illegal working conditions to maintain their employment.

Over the years, the University has stated that its purpose for graduate assistantships is to train and mentor graduate students for their professional careers. Taking collective action for the betterment of working conditions and collective bargaining should be included in that training. Being subject to arbitrary and capricious employment decisions and poor and abusive working conditions only trains graduate students to accept that such harmful conduct is a necessary component to academic life – when it, in fact, is not.

In 1968, the people of Hawai'i amended the Hawai'i State Constitution to provide public employees the right to collectively bargain. Article XIII, Section 2 of the Hawai'i State Constitution. Nevertheless, the implementing statute has been interpreted to exclude graduate students from the ambit of the public employee collective bargaining statute.

That interpretation exceeds the powers of the legislature and violates such a right. “[T]he framers [of the constitution] were not in favor of granting the legislature the ultimate power to deny the right to organize for the purpose of collectively bargaining.” *UPW v. Yogi*, 101 Haw. 46, 52 (2002)

HB 553 will amend Chapter 89, HRS, to properly include graduate students so that they may exercise their constitutional right to organize and collectively bargain for better working conditions.

Mahalo.

//

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
Sent: Tuesday, February 03, 2015 8:44 PM  
To: LABtestimony  
Cc: chelsiew12@gmail.com  
Subject: \*Submitted testimony for HB553 on Feb 6, 2015 09:00AM\*

**HB553**

Submitted on: 2/3/2015

Testimony for LAB on Feb 6, 2015 09:00AM in Conference Room 309

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Chelsie Counsell	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

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Date: Friday, February 9, 2015

Time: 9:00 AM

Place: Conference Room 309

To: House Committee on Higher Education Representative Isaac Choy, Chair and House Committee on Judiciary Representative Karl Rhoads, Chair and Labor & Public Employment Representative Mark Nakashima, Chair

Re: Support of HB 553 Relating to the University of Hawaii

My name is Claudio Corti, and I am a graduate student at University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. I am writing in strong support of HB 553 to grant collective bargaining rights to graduate students employed by the University of Hawai'i.

The compensation scale for graduate assistants has not been increased since 2003/2004. Previously, the scale was increased every year from 1987/88 to 1992/93 and every three or four years between 1993/94 and 2003/2004. Policy set by President of the University of Hawai'i System has scheduled the next review for 2018.

Graduate student employees are rehired each year, and sometimes each semester, many students are afraid to complain about being overworked and/or mistreated. Loss of employment midyear could be devastating as deadlines for financial assistance are either prior to the start of fall or early in the fall semester.

Graduate student employees have no say over insurance premiums. Our insurance premiums are higher than faculty yet constituting a more significant portion of our salary. Moreover, we are not afforded sick days or family leave. As a result, sick graduate student employees risk being fired if they choose to stay home in order to avoid spreading illness to students.

Graduate students are an integral part of the UH system. We constitute a committed learning community, do important research, and perform a substantial proportion of the teaching duties. However, we are not afforded the same labor protections that faculty and staff are. We deserve to be treated equally, not abused and exploited.

Name Claudio Corti

Email [corti@hawaii.edu](mailto:corti@hawaii.edu)

Phone 8087212686

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
Sent: Tuesday, February 03, 2015 9:28 PM  
To: LABtestimony  
Cc: taradale44@gmail.com  
Subject: Submitted testimony for HB553 on Feb 6, 2015 09:00AM

**HB553**

Submitted on: 2/3/2015

Testimony for LAB on Feb 6, 2015 09:00AM in Conference Room 309

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Margaret Maaka	Individual	Support	No

Comments: Testimony in Support of HB553

Please note that testimony submitted less than 24 hours prior to the hearing, improperly identified, or directed to the incorrect office, may not be posted online or distributed to the committee prior to the convening of the public hearing.

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Dear Committee on Labor and Public Employment,

The matter of collective bargaining for graduate students at the University of Hawai'i is a chance for this progressive state to bring its professional academic employment laws into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The tradition in academia, which has long been kept and enforced by the system's aging academics, is of a mentor and apprentice. I have heard many refer to this relationship as providing graduate students with our "dirty corner" and meager food so that one day we can finish our degrees and join those in the ivory tower. This unfortunately is an archaic view that no longer fits or works in modern life. No longer is the cost of living limited to cheap housing and cheap food, neither of which is an option in Honolulu. This now includes ever rising utilities, mobile phone, internet, and education related technology costs. No longer is the end goal an attainable finish line, with a very small percentage (~1.3%, <http://arstechnica.com/science/2015/01/another-set-of-ideas-for-fixing-the-funding-crisis-for-young-researchers/>) of researchers under 36 even receiving grant funding, much less are getting the opportunity to apply for academic positions that are dependent on past history of awards and publications. Is the future of us young researchers and teachers reflective on how we have been treated throughout the advancement process? We have received an almost unchanged amount over the past decade despite that dramatic increase in cost of living. We are told this is because we are only working part time, but how are we supposed to do a professional teaching job when staying within our 20 hours per week? We should be compensated for the job we do and not the amount of hours or the misguided view of what we do by those who are supposed to advise and support us. As far as I have been made aware teaching assistant and most research assistant positions in UH departments pay less than \$20k a year's equivalent to their professional teaching assistants and researchers. These are the same graduate students that provide much of the instruction for undergraduates educated in this state and much of the work on ground breaking research that pushes forward our knowledge of the world and provides medical solutions for the future. As many of this committee and the general public already know this is not enough to maintain the cost of living in Honolulu, much less be able to provide professional dress and equipment for our careers. Our advisors clearly are successful in the job of pushing us to these successes, but in the case of lifestyle and ensuring we don't end up hungry and unable to pay rent, they have failed. The responsibility of ensuring that graduate students are paid both fairly and a living wage for the city of Honolulu should not reside on those that have no experience in life outside academia or in monetary business themselves. This is a circumstance where those that have the most to gain from graduate student's underpayment have been granted time and time again the right to dictate what is best compensation for graduate students. This is in no way an insult or a call of ineptitude in academic advisors to do their job, only an advisement on the inappropriateness and unjustness of allowing those that benefit from setting low wage standards from being allowed to set the line for graduate compensation. As many who have come from making nothing to being even slightly comfortable with their bank accounts from month to month know, this would make a world of difference in the quality of both research and teaching from graduate students thanks to the reduced monetary pressure that leaves all graduate students in a constant state of poverty and stress.

Mahalo for you time,

Sean Wilbur 

Graduate Student in the Department of Zoology, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa,

Former undergraduate student in Zoology and ASUH Senator at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.



Date: Friday, February 6, 2015

Time: 9:00 AM

Place: Conference Room 309

To: Representative Mark Nakashima, Chair  
Representative Jarrett Keohokalole, Vice Chair

Re: Support of HB 553 Relating to the University of Hawaii

My name is Ryan Tolman, and I am a graduate student at University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. I am writing in strong support of HB 553 to grant collective bargaining rights to graduate students employed by the University of Hawai'i.

The compensation scale for graduate assistants has not been increased since 2003/2004. Previously, the scale was increased every year from 1987/88 to 1992/93 and every three or four years between 1993/94 and 2003/2004. Policy set by President of the University of Hawai'i System has scheduled the next review for 2018.

Graduate student employees are rehired each year, and sometimes each semester, many students are afraid to complain about being overworked and/or mistreated. Loss of employment midyear could be devastating as deadlines for financial assistance are either prior to the start of fall or early in the fall semester.

Graduate student employees have no say over insurance premiums. Our insurance premiums are higher than faculty yet constituting a more significant portion of our salary. Moreover, we are not afforded sick days or family leave. As a result, sick graduate student employees risk being fired if they choose to stay home in order to avoid spreading illness to students.

I am in support of this bill because it has taken me 11 years to try and complete my PhD in Social Psychology since moving to Hawai'i and enrolling at UHM as a graduate student. While I claim much of the fault, certainly a significant factor in the time that it has taken me is due to the inadequate compensation provided to graduate students at UHM. I was awarded a tuition waiver upon entering UHM as a graduate student, which paid for tuition but not living expenses. I was never told that the tuition waiver was only good for one year, and when I tried to register for classes my second year, I had to take a \$5,000 loan in order to cover expenses. Since then I have been fortunate to be employed as a graduate research assistant, working 0.50 FTE in such settings as the Hawai'i State's Child & Adolescent Mental Health Division and UHM Office of Evaluation where I have evaluated programs at the Center for Microbial Oceanography Research and Education (C-MORE) and John A. Burns School of Medicine (JABSOM). Still my monthly take home in this work is barely enough to cover rent and so I have had to make ends meet by taking on additional evaluation consulting work with local nonprofit agencies in the community. At times, I have had to hold down 4-5 side jobs in order to make ends meet, all so I could stay here and continue to pursue my goal of earning a doctorate degree in social psychology. Still none of this extra work allows me much time to pursue my primary objective of obtaining my desired degree.

Graduate students in the same degree field as me at comparable institutions are often guaranteed funding for 4-5 years to complete their degree and their compensation is enough for them to live adequately and focus on their studies. Here at UH, our monthly take home is barely enough to pay for rent. Our funding is never guaranteed. We are constantly in fear of losing funding and wondering how we will continue our studies, or whether we will have to leave and throw away years of our lives spent towards a degree that we were never able to finish due to lack of funding. Graduate students are so inadequately compensated at UHM that I always advise

undergraduates who are thinking of applying to graduate study at UHM that they should apply elsewhere.

Graduate students are an integral part of the UH system. We constitute a committed learning community, do important research, and perform a substantial proportion of the teaching duties. However, we are not afforded the same labor protections that faculty and staff are. We deserve to be treated equally, not abused and exploited.

Ryan Tolman  
[rtolman@hawaii.edu](mailto:rtolman@hawaii.edu)  
956-6814

To: House Committee on Higher Education Representative Isaac Choy, Chair

Re: Support of HB 553 Relating to the University of Hawai'i

My name is Robert Cooney and I have been a faculty member at University of Hawai'i at Mānoa for 30 years. I wish to express my strong support of SB 638 to grant collective bargaining rights to graduate students employed by the University of Hawai'i.

Faculty, students and staff of the university of Hawai'i all contribute significantly to the economic and cultural health of Hawai'i. The laws regarding collective bargaining were drafted to create a system that guaranteed equity for those with the least power. While faculty and staff enjoy the protections afforded by those laws, graduate students do not. It is vital that we end the discriminatory exclusion of graduate students from the protections of Hawai'i's labor laws and allow them to organize to gain their rights as Hawai'i citizens and stop their exploitation within the UH system. I urge you to adopt HB 553 in support of the right of students to unionize.

Sincerely,

Robert V. Cooney, PhD  
95-1006 Haakualiki Street  
Mililani, HI 96789

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
Sent: Wednesday, February 04, 2015 8:31 AM  
To: LABtestimony  
Cc: unheelim@gmail.com  
Subject: \*Submitted testimony for HB553 on Feb 6, 2015 09:00AM\*

**HB553**

Submitted on: 2/4/2015

Testimony for LAB on Feb 6, 2015 09:00AM in Conference Room 309

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Unhee Lim	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

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Date: Friday, February 6, 2015

Time: 9:00 AM

Place: Conference Room 309

To: Representative Committee on Labor and Public Employment, Rep. Mark M. Nakashima,  
Chair

Re: Support of HB 553 Relating to the University of Hawaii

My name is Emilie Richards, and I am a graduate student at University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. I am writing in strong support of HB 553 to grant collective bargaining rights to graduate students employed by the University of Hawai'i.

The compensation scale for graduate assistants has not been increased since 2003/2004. Previously, the scale was increased every year from 1987/88 to 1992/93 and every three or four years between 1993/94 and 2003/2004. Policy set by President of the University of Hawai'i System has scheduled the next review for 2018.

Graduate student employees are rehired each year, and sometimes each semester, many students are afraid to complain about being overworked and/or mistreated. Loss of employment midyear could be devastating as deadlines for financial assistance are either prior to the start of fall or early in the fall semester.

Graduate student employees have no say over insurance premiums. Our insurance premiums are higher than faculty yet constituting a more significant portion of our salary. Moreover, we are not afforded sick days or family leave. As a result, sick graduate student employees risk being fired if they choose to stay home in order to avoid spreading illness to students.

I personally never know from one semester to the next if I will have support the next semester until less than a month before that semester starts. A sudden loss in employment would be devastating for me because most deadlines for applying for financial aid would have already passed. I would have no other means of paying off the expense of graduate student tuition besides taking out crippling student loans. Fortunately, I have yet to have to work more than 20 hours a week I am paid for, but I know many graduate students who end up doing much more work than they are paid. We are all afraid to complain about the group of us being overworked as a whole to those in charge for fear of being replaced easily due to job insecurity and the high competition for graduate assistantships.

Graduate students are an integral part of the UH system. We constitute a committed learning community, do important research, and perform a substantial proportion of the teaching duties. However, we are not afforded the same labor protections that faculty and staff are. We deserve to be treated equally, not abused and exploited.

Emilie Richards  
[ejr@hawaii.edu](mailto:ejr@hawaii.edu)  
(208)490-0276

My name is Bradley Rentz and I am graduate student at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa, and I strongly support HB553.

The compensation scale for graduate assistants has not been increased since 2003/2004. Previously, the scale was increased every year from 1987/88 to 1992/93 and every three or four years between 1993/94 and 2003/2004. Policy set by President of the University of Hawai'i System has scheduled the next review for 2018.

Graduate student employees are rehired each year, and sometimes each semester, many students are afraid to complain about being overworked and/or mistreated. Loss of employment midyear could be devastating as deadlines for financial assistance are either prior to the start of fall or early in the fall semester.

Graduate student employees have no say over insurance premiums. Our insurance premiums are higher than faculty yet constituting a more significant portion of our salary. Moreover, we are not afforded sick days or family leave. As a result, sick graduate student employees risk being fired if they choose to stay home in order to avoid spreading illness to students.

Graduate students are an integral part of the UH system. We constitute a committed learning community, do important research, and perform a substantial proportion of the teaching duties. However, we are not afforded the same labor protections that faculty and staff are. We deserve to be treated equally, not abused and exploited.

From: Benjamin Wainwright <bw2@hawaii.edu>  
Sent: Wednesday, February 04, 2015 10:03 AM  
To: LABtestimony  
Subject: Testimony in Support of HB553 for LAB Hearing

To: Senate Committee on Higher Education and Arts Senator Brian Taniguchi, Chair and Senate Committee on Judiciary and Labor Senator Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran, Chair

Re: Support of HB 553 Relating to the University of Hawaii

My name is Ben Wainwright and I am a graduate student at University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. I am writing in strong support of HB 553 to grant collective bargaining rights to graduate students employed by the University of Hawai'i.

The compensation scale for graduate assistants has not been increased since 2003/2004. Previously, the scale was increased every year from 1987/88 to 1992/93 and every three or four years between 1993/94 and 2003/2004. Policy set by President of the University of Hawai'i System has scheduled the next review for 2018.

Graduate student employees are rehired each year, and sometimes each semester, many students are afraid to complain about being overworked and/or mistreated. Loss of employment midyear could be devastating as deadlines for financial assistance are either prior to the start of fall or early in the fall semester.

Graduate student employees have no say over insurance premiums. Our insurance premiums are higher than faculty yet constituting a more significant portion of our salary. Moreover, we are not afforded sick days or family leave. As a result, sick graduate student employees risk being fired if they choose to stay home in order to avoid spreading illness to students.

Graduate students are an integral part of the UH system. We constitute a committed learning community, do important research, and perform a substantial proportion of the teaching duties. However, we are not afforded the same labor protections that faculty and staff are. We deserve to be treated equally, not abused and exploited.

Ben Wainwright

BW2@Hawaii.edu



Date: Thursday, February 5, 2015

Time: 1:30 PM

Place: Conference Room 224

To: Senate Committee on Higher Education and Arts Senator Brian Taniguchi, Chair and Senate Committee on Judiciary and Labor Senator Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran, Chair

Re: Support of SB 638 Relating to the University of Hawaii

My name is Kanoë Morishige, and I am a graduate student at University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. I am writing in strong support of SB 638 to grant collective bargaining rights to graduate students employed by the University of Hawai'i.

The compensation scale for graduate assistants has not been increased since 2003/2004. Previously, the scale was increased every year from 1987/88 to 1992/93 and every three or four years between 1993/94 and 2003/2004. Policy set by President of the University of Hawai'i System has scheduled the next review for 2018.

Graduate student employees are rehired each year, and sometimes each semester, many students are afraid to complain about being overworked and/or mistreated. Loss of employment midyear could be devastating as deadlines for financial assistance are either prior to the start of fall or early in the fall semester.

Graduate student employees have no say over insurance premiums. Our insurance premiums are higher than faculty yet constituting a more significant portion of our salary. Moreover, we are not afforded sick days or family leave. As a result, sick graduate student employees risk being fired if they choose to stay home in order to avoid spreading illness to students.

It is very hard to stomach the instability of employment positions offered to graduate students. Most of the time the positions are teaching assistantships. As a biology graduate student, I understand that teaching assistantships are an integral part of the sustainable management of UH, yet we are treated as if we are disposable. Currently, we have no UH administrative representatives taking accountability for the severe budget cuts looming in the near future. I believe granting collective bargaining rights for graduate students will protect our livelihoods as we make ends meet to continue our academic pursuit of knowledge.

Graduate students are an integral part of the UH system. We put forth our full effort to teach required biology classes which in turn help more undergraduate students fulfill their requirements to graduate faster. We constitute a committed learning community, do important research, and perform a substantial proportion of the teaching duties. However, we are not afforded the same labor protections that faculty and staff are. We deserve to be treated equally, not abused and exploited.

Kanoë Morishige  
kimmhkm@hawaii.edu  
722-1366

Date: Thursday, February 5, 2015

Time: 1:30 PM

Place: Conference Room 224

To: Senate Committee on Higher Education and Arts Senator Brian Taniguchi, Chair and Senate Committee on Judiciary and Labor Senator Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran, Chair

Re: Support of SB 638 Relating to the University of Hawaii

My name is Jonathan Whitney, and I am a graduate student at University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. I am writing in strong support of SB 638 to grant collective bargaining rights to graduate students employed by the University of Hawai'i.

The compensation scale for graduate assistants has not been increased since 2003/2004. Previously, the scale was increased every year from 1987/88 to 1992/93 and every three or four years between 1993/94 and 2003/2004. Policy set by President of the University of Hawai'i System has scheduled the next review for 2018.

Graduate student employees are rehired each year, and sometimes each semester, many students are afraid to complain about being overworked and/or mistreated. Loss of employment midyear could be devastating as deadlines for financial assistance are either prior to the start of fall or early in the fall semester.

Graduate student employees have no say over insurance premiums. Our insurance premiums are higher than faculty yet constituting a more significant portion of our salary. Moreover, we are not afforded sick days or family leave. As a result, sick graduate student employees risk being fired if they choose to stay home in order to avoid spreading illness to students.

The mean annual wage graduate assistants earn at UH (\$17,500) is in lowest 10% percentile in the nation, and is only slightly more than half of the national average (\$31,810) according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Given the high relative cost of living in Hawaii, a graduate student with 1 child is earning less than the 2014 poverty guideline for Hawaii (data from US Dept. Health & Human Services).

Graduate students are an integral part of the UH system. We constitute a committed learning community, do important research, and perform a substantial proportion of the teaching duties. However, we are not afforded the same labor protections that faculty and staff are. We deserve to be treated equally, not abused and exploited.

Jonathan Whitney  
[Jw2@hawaii.edu](mailto:Jw2@hawaii.edu)  
808-348-3254

Date: 5 February 2015  
Time: 1:30 PM  
Place: Conference Room 224

To: Senate Committee on Higher Education and Arts Senator Brian Taniguchi, Chair and  
Senate Committee on Judiciary and Labor Senator Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran, Chair

Re: Support of SB 638 Relating to the University of Hawaii

My name is Van Wishingrad and I am a graduate student at University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. I am writing in strong support of SB 638 to grant collective bargaining rights to graduate students employed by the University of Hawai'i.

The compensation scale for graduate assistants has not been increased since 2003/2004. Previously, the scale was increased every year from 1987/88 to 1992/93 and every three or four years between 1993/94 and 2003/2004. Policy set by President of the University of Hawai'i System has scheduled the next review for 2018.

Graduate student employees are rehired each year, and sometimes each semester, many students are afraid to complain about being overworked and/or mistreated. Loss of employment midyear could be devastating as deadlines for financial assistance are either prior to the start of fall or early in the fall semester.

Graduate student employees have no say over insurance premiums. Our insurance premiums are higher than faculty yet constituting a more significant portion of our salary. Moreover, we are not afforded sick days or family leave. As a result, sick graduate student employees risk being fired if they choose to stay home in order to avoid spreading illness to students.

Several other universities in the country have already established collective bargaining rights for graduate students, including: University of Wisconsin-Madison, University of Michigan, University of Oregon, University of Florida, Florida A&M, University of South Florida, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, University of Kansas, University of Massachusetts, University of Iowa, Wayne State University, New York University, and the University of California. I urge Hawaii to follow precedent and allow collective bargaining for graduate students at the University of Hawaii.

Graduate students are an integral part of the UH system. We constitute a committed learning community, do important research, and perform a substantial proportion of the teaching duties. However, we are not afforded the same labor protections that faculty and staff are. We deserve to be treated equally, not abused and exploited.

Van Wishingrad  
[vanw@hawaii.edu](mailto:vanw@hawaii.edu)  
(808) 202-7682

From: John K <johnkoblanski@gmail.com>  
Sent: Wednesday, February 04, 2015 11:48 AM  
To: LABtestimony  
Subject: Support for HB553

Dear Representatives,

I am a teaching assistant from Canada currently engaged in my 4th year of physics phd studies at University of Hawaii. My experience here has been marred by the lack of job security stemming from buget problems at the school. In light of current controversial spending issues at this institution, graduate students are in absolute desperate need of unionized representation. We as a group are absolutely vital to the everyday operations of this school. With our very specific skills as a group we are not easily replaceable. Please consider our proposal for unionized representation.

Thank you for your consideration,

John Koblanski

From: Parthib Patra <parthib@hawaii.edu>  
Sent: Wednesday, February 04, 2015 12:46 PM  
To: LABtestimony  
Subject: Testimony in support of HB 553 for LAB Hearing relating to the University of Hawaii

Date: Friday, February 6, 2015

Time: 9:00 AM

Place: Conference Room 309

To

Representative Mark Nakashima, Chair

Representative Jarrett Keohokalole, Vice Chair

Respected Sirs,

My name is Parthib Patra, and I am a graduate student and graduate teaching assistant at University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. I am writing in strong support of HB 553 to grant collective bargaining rights to graduate students employed by the University of Hawai'i.

The compensation scale for graduate assistants has not been increased since 2003/2004.

Previously, the scale was increased every year from 1987/88 to 1992/93 and every three or four

years between 1993/94 and 2003/2004. Policy set by President of the University of Hawai'i System has scheduled the next review for 2018.

Graduate student employees are rehired each year, and sometimes each semester. Many students are afraid to complain about being overworked and/or mistreated. Loss of employment mid-year could be devastating as deadlines for financial assistance are either prior to the start of fall or early in the fall semester.

Graduate student employees have no say over insurance premiums. Our insurance premiums are higher than faculty yet constituting a more significant portion of our salary. Moreover, we are not afforded sick days or family leave. As a result, sick graduate student employees risk being fired if they choose to stay home in order to avoid spreading illness to students.

Regarding the insurance premium and payment information: I have friends in some other departments in the mainland, where the university pays the health insurance and the average salary is way higher than ours. Moreover, the cost of living in Hawaii is way more than the cost of living in the midwestern or southern states, hence we can barely save sufficient amount of money for ourselves.

Graduate students are an integral part of the UH system. We constitute a committed learning community, do important research, and perform a substantial proportion of the teaching duties. However, we are not afforded the same labor protections that faculty and staff are. We deserve to be treated equally, not abused and exploited.

Sincerely,

Name: Parthib Patra

Email: [parthib@hawaii.edu](mailto:parthib@hawaii.edu)

Phone: [808-321-9779](tel:808-321-9779)

Date: Thursday, February 6, 2015

Time: 9:00 AM

Place: LAB 309

To: Senate Committee on Higher Education and Arts Senator Brian Taniguchi, Chair and Senate Committee on Judiciary and Labor Senator Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran, Chair

Re: Support of HB 553 Relating to the University of Hawaii

My name is Richard Coleman, and I am a graduate student at University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. I am writing in strong support of HB 553 to grant collective bargaining rights to graduate students employed by the University of Hawai'i.

The compensation scale for graduate assistants has not been increased since 2003/2004. Previously, the scale was increased every year from 1987/88 to 1992/93 and every three or four years between 1993/94 and 2003/2004. Policy set by President of the University of Hawai'i System has scheduled the next review for 2018.

Graduate student employees are rehired each year, and sometimes each semester, many students are afraid to complain about being overworked and/or mistreated. Loss of employment midyear could be devastating as deadlines for financial assistance are either prior to the start of fall or early in the fall semester.

Graduate student employees have no say over insurance premiums. Our insurance premiums are higher than faculty yet constituting a more significant portion of our salary. Moreover, we are not afforded sick days or family leave. As a result, sick graduate student employees risk being fired if they choose to stay home in order to avoid spreading illness to students.

Graduate students are an integral part of the UH system. We constitute a committed learning community, do important research, and perform a substantial proportion of the teaching duties. However, we are not afforded the same labor protections that faculty and staff are. We deserve to be treated equally, not abused and exploited.

Richard Coleman  
[rcolema@hawaii.edu](mailto:rcolema@hawaii.edu)  
916-524-3734

Date: Friday, February 6, 2015

Time: 9:00 AM

Place: Conference Room 309

To: Representative Mark Nakashima, Chair  
Representative Jarrett Keohokalole, Vice Chair

Re: Support of HB 553 Relating to the University of Hawaii

My name is Bret Polopolus-Meredith, and I am a graduate student employee at University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. I am writing in strong support of HB 553 to grant collective bargaining rights to graduate students employed by the University of Hawai'i.

The University of Hawai'i already treats graduate student employees as a collective. The compensation scale is set for all graduate assistants. The benefits are the same. Yet, we are denied collective negotiations to improve our lot. This denies graduate students a voice in affairs that directly affect them

This causes a fundamental imbalance of power in the relationship between students and the university. This imbalance is exacerbated when we must also rely upon the university for our sole livelihood. Graduate student employees are not allowed to take second jobs that could offset remedial pay and benefits.

Graduate student employees teach classes, perform research, and work in administration while progressing toward a degree. They are extremely busy performing duties that benefit undergraduates, faculty, and administration. Graduate students should not have to protest and hold three-day sit-ins to prevent the sudden and unannounced elimination of jobs as was done in November 2014. There should not be more than ten years between raises to the graduate compensation scale, especially when other income options are stymied. Graduate students should not be forced to spend time away from degree progress to plan protests over substandard pay, benefits, work conditions, and job security simply because we cannot negotiate collectively.

Bret Polopolus-Meredith  
bp32@hawaii.edu  
808-304-9334



From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
Sent: Wednesday, February 04, 2015 3:53 PM  
To: LABtestimony  
Cc: waimeavalleygirl@me.com  
Subject: \*Submitted testimony for HB553 on Feb 6, 2015 09:00AM\*

**HB553**

Submitted on: 2/4/2015

Testimony for LAB on Feb 6, 2015 09:00AM in Conference Room 309

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Bonnyjean Manini	Individual	Oppose	No

Comments:

Please note that testimony submitted less than 24 hours prior to the hearing, improperly identified, or directed to the incorrect office, may not be posted online or distributed to the committee prior to the convening of the public hearing.

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From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
Sent: Wednesday, February 04, 2015 3:56 PM  
To: LABtestimony  
Cc: matt.htfa@gmail.com  
Subject: Submitted testimony for HB553 on Feb 6, 2015 09:00AM

**HB553**

Submitted on: 2/4/2015

Testimony for LAB on Feb 6, 2015 09:00AM in Conference Room 309

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Matthew Ross	Individual	Support	No

Comments: I support the rights of student employees to unionize. Student help is critical to the operation of the university.

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keohokalole2-Relley

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From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
Sent: Wednesday, February 04, 2015 5:00 PM  
To: LABtestimony  
Cc: kealiig@hotmail.com  
Subject: \*Submitted testimony for HB553 on Feb 6, 2015 09:00AM\*

**HB553**

Submitted on: 2/4/2015

Testimony for LAB on Feb 6, 2015 09:00AM in Conference Room 309

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Keali'i Gora	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Please note that testimony submitted less than 24 hours prior to the hearing, improperly identified, or directed to the incorrect office, may not be posted online or distributed to the committee prior to the convening of the public hearing.

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Date: Thursday, February 5, 2015

Time: 1:30 PM

Place: Conference Room 224

To: Senate Committee on Higher Education and Arts Senator Brian Taniguchi, Chair and Senate Committee on Judiciary and Labor Senator Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran, Chair

Re: Support of HB 553 Relating to the University of Hawaii

My name is Michael Hoban, and I am a graduate student at University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. I am writing in strong support of HB 553 to grant collective bargaining rights to graduate students employed by the University of Hawai'i.

The compensation scale for graduate assistants has not been increased since 2003/2004. Previously, the scale was increased every year from 1987/88 to 1992/93 and every three or four years between 1993/94 and 2003/2004. Policy set by President of the University of Hawai'i System has scheduled the next review for 2018.

Graduate student employees are rehired each year, and sometimes each semester, many students are afraid to complain about being overworked and/or mistreated. Loss of employment midyear could be devastating as deadlines for financial assistance are either prior to the start of fall or early in the fall semester.

Graduate student employees have no say over insurance premiums. Our insurance premiums are higher than faculty yet constituting a more significant portion of our salary. Moreover, we are not afforded sick days or family leave. As a result, sick graduate student employees risk being fired if they choose to stay home in order to avoid spreading illness to students.

Graduate students are an integral part of the UH system. We constitute a committed learning community, do important research, and perform a substantial proportion of the teaching duties. However, we are not afforded the same labor protections that faculty and staff are. We deserve to be treated equally, not abused and exploited.

Michael Hoban  
mhoban@hawaii.edu

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
Sent: Wednesday, February 04, 2015 8:45 PM  
To: LABtestimony  
Cc: pwegesen@hawaii.edu  
Subject: Submitted testimony for HB553 on Feb 6, 2015 09:00AM

**HB553**

Submitted on: 2/4/2015

Testimony for LAB on Feb 6, 2015 09:00AM in Conference Room 309

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Pablo Wegesend	Individual	Comments Only	No

Comments: Please allow Graduate Assistants, Teaching Assistants and all other UH graduate student employees to unionize. Worker protections are very important!

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Do not reply to this email. This inbox is not monitored. For assistance please email [webmaster@capitol.hawaii.gov](mailto:webmaster@capitol.hawaii.gov)

Date: Thursday, February 5, 2015

Time: 1:30 PM

Place: Conference Room 224

To: Senate Committee on Higher Education and Arts Senator Brian Taniguchi, Chair and Senate Committee on Judiciary and Labor Senator Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran, Chair

Re: Support of HB 638 Relating to the University of Hawaii

My name is Martha Newell, and I am a graduate student at University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. I am writing in strong support of HB 638 to grant collective bargaining rights to graduate students employed by the University of Hawai'i.

The compensation scale for graduate assistants has not been increased since 2003/2004. Previously, the scale was increased every year from 1987/88 to 1992/93 and every three or four years between 1993/94 and 2003/2004. Policy set by President of the University of Hawai'i System has scheduled the next review for 2018.

Graduate student employees are rehired each year, and sometimes each semester, many students are afraid to complain about being overworked and/or mistreated. Loss of employment midyear could be devastating as deadlines for financial assistance are either prior to the start of fall or early in the fall semester.

Graduate student employees have no say over insurance premiums. Our insurance premiums are higher than faculty yet constituting a more significant portion of our salary. Moreover, we are not afforded sick days or family leave. As a result, sick graduate student employees risk being fired if they choose to stay home in order to avoid spreading illness to students.

When I came into the Biology graduate program at UH, I was being paid \$18,000/year. That is not enough to live on in O'ahu. I love this state, and I love my school, but the graduate community as a whole are paupers. Last semester, our department was faced with cutting up to half of our Teaching Assistant positions, potentially leaving 20 or more students without funding to continue their studies. We don't ask for much, but we do ask to be treated as important to our department and not treated as a disposable good.

Graduate students are an integral part of the UH system. We constitute a committed learning community, do important research, and perform a substantial proportion of the teaching duties. However, we are not afforded the same labor protections that faculty and staff are. We deserve to be treated equally, not abused and exploited.

Martha Newell  
mnewell@hawaii.edu  
860-917-4426

Date: Friday, February 6, 2015

Time: 9:00 AM

Place: Conference Room 309

To: Representative Mark Nakashima, Chair  
Representative Jarrett Keohokalole, Vice Chair

Re: Support of HB 553 Relating to the University of Hawaii

My name is Nicholas Chagnon, and I am a graduate student at UH Manoa. I work for the Women's Studies department as a graduate assistant; lecture as adjunct faculty for the Sociology Department; and serve as Co-Advocacy Chair for the Graduate Student Organization. I am writing in strong support of HB 553 to grant collective bargaining rights to graduate students employed by the University of Hawai'i.

The compensation scale for graduate assistants has not been increased since 2003/2004. Previously, the scale was increased every year from 1987/88 to 1992/93 and every three or four years between 1993/94 and 2003/2004. Policy set by President of the University of Hawai'i System has scheduled the next review for 2018. The current minimum pay, \$17,500, is far below a living wage. It often forces graduate students to live in poverty conditions, affecting the quality of their work and the speed with which they are able to earn their degrees.

Graduate student employees are rehired each year, and sometimes each semester, many students are afraid to complain about being overworked and/or mistreated. Loss of employment midyear could be devastating as deadlines for financial assistance are either prior to the start of fall or early in the fall semester.

Graduate student employees have no say over insurance premiums. Our insurance premiums are higher than faculty yet constituting a more significant portion of our salary. Moreover, we are not afforded sick days or family leave. As a result, sick graduate student employees risk being fired if they choose to stay home in order to avoid spreading illness to students.

I have worked at the university for five years, as a teaching assistant, research assistant, and adjunct faculty. I have not once received a pay increase that was not the result of switching jobs. In fact, my net pay decreased several times due to increases in our insurance premiums. When I first came here, I lived in unsafe housing with poor wiring and could barely afford groceries. I often had to delay in buying staple foods such as milk and bread, because I could only afford to cover my rent at the time. Eventually, I was forced to take out student loans to supplement my income. Because of this, I face a student debt of over \$100,000 when I graduate.

Graduate students are an integral part of the UH system. We constitute a committed learning community, do important research, and perform a substantial proportion of the teaching duties. However, we are not afforded the same labor protections that faculty and staff are. We deserve to be treated equally, not abused and exploited.

Nicholas Chagnon  
PhD candidate, UHM Sociology  
Research Assistant, UHM Women's Studies  
Co-advocacy chair, UHM Graduate Student Organization  
[chagnon@hawaii.edu](mailto:chagnon@hawaii.edu)  
956-7464